



A Tale of a Tainted Tennis Ball.

I am a tennis ball! I was created in a tennis ball factory, along with hundreds of thousands of other tennis balls. You might not have really thought too much about me and my kind. I'm not surprised really. Not too many people do give me a second thought. Even though I do my job, day in and day out, I am never thanked. In fact, the lot of a tennis ball does not even rate a mention in research or surveys of the roles of various people, tools, or organisations. It all gets a bit too much sometimes. I just wish that someone, somewhere would think about us. Now is an opportunity to tell my tale, to hopefully gain the sympathy of humans and to improve the lot of my friends and colleagues. We have decided to become united in our efforts to be recognised for who we really are and to stop the hurtful ballism (discrimination against balls) that goes on in this world.

From the moment we are created, our life as a tennis ball is one that is full of danger and hurt. Just think what happens to a tennis ball. That's right, we are used to play tennis. We are thrown on the ground, tossed into the air, hit by a tennis racquet, hit by another tennis racquet, then another, then another, over and over again. When they have finished belting us, sometimes after many hours, we are tossed into a big bag and pushed into a dark cupboard to wait till next time we are pulled out and tortured. Sometimes we are used in a ball machine, where we are thrown out into the sky at tremendous speed so that someone can hit us again. There are even some who are attached to a pole with a piece of elastic and hit over and over. Imagine the horror! No respite from the hitting and nowhere to go to escape.

We are not even created as equals with each other. Take me for example, I come from a batch of different coloured balls. Even though this might appear to be non-discriminatory, it is not really so. Our different colours are really a barrier to success. The only balls chosen for the 'real' games of tennis are green. The rest of us are just "practice" balls. How do you think that makes us feel? We are the ones who get hit the most. It never stops – not until our fuzz is all gone and we have lost a lot of our bounce. For the privileged 'greenies', life is different. OK, so they go through a lot more testing at the factory to make sure their bounce is just right, and they seem to have better fuzz, but they don't get used like the rest of us. Just a couple of games and they are out to rest, often given to some child or other spectator at one of the big matches. Sometimes a super tennis star will write on them and then they are kept in a special place and people look at them and admire them. They are kept away from grubby little hands and never have to worry about being hit again.



Some balls get lucky – they get lost. Someone hits them way out of the tennis court and they can't be found. How fortunate for them. The only problem is that they are no longer with their friends, they are alone in the world. They still face major problems too – dogs. A dog will find a tennis ball and begin to torment the poor thing. Slobbered on, chewed, clawed – it's not pretty! Humans don't help us. In fact, they will pick up one of these unfortunate little fellows and actually throw it so that the dog will run after it and grab it in its mouth. Cruel, cruel, cruel!!! Nothing will wear down a ball's fuzz quicker than dog slobber! A fuzz-less tennis ball is like chips without salt – not much good for anything.

Swimming pools are another place where we tennis balls get used and abused. For some reason humans like to throw us around in the water. Now- don't get me wrong – we like to be clean, but bobbing around for days in a pool of water is not about being clean, it's about being waterlogged and uncomfortable! Imagine our fear too, when we are suddenly picked up and pelted at a human. Even though the human might look scared as we hurtle towards them at great speed, we are terrified! The only consolation we have is that, if we make contact with skin, we can sometimes leave a nice red mark! Oh the satisfaction when that happens. It is almost worth the pain we go through, just to hear the yelps of pain as we hit!!!

When we are finished our usefulness - no fuzz left and not enough bounce, what do you think happens to us? Landfill!!!! We are too small to turn into planters. We don't look good enough to be an ornament and no one seems to think we are good enough to use as a bath tub toy. Yep – landfill it is. There has been some talk of maybe recycling us into tyres for cars. I don't think this a great idea. After all, tyres take quite a pounding too – but that's another tale.

So, what do we want from you? Well, you can be our 'voice'. Tell the world of our suffering. Make people aware of what we are going through. Call people to action, to change our lives. But most of all – understand us. Treat us with kindness and we will serve you well. Next time you see a lonely tennis ball, take the time to talk to it, get to know it and maybe, just maybe, you will appreciate tennis balls a lot more in the future.